

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MERIT SYSTEM JOBS

INTRODUCTION

In 1996, we expanded the Workforce Profile to include comprehensive information on local government employment in New Jersey for the first time. The most important barrier to achieving this goal is the absence of a single uniform database that captures local government data in a degree of detail comparable to what we can provide about State Government employees. The most comprehensive database on local government employees to which we have access is the State Government Pensions database maintained by the Division of Pensions and Benefits, but this database is organized in a different manner and work to reconcile the two databases is still underway. For the time being, the most useful database we have is the Department of Personnel's Consolidated Employee File, which includes data on local government jobs that fall under the purview of the Merit System. This year we examine the same types of statistics as we did in prior years.

The New Jersey Department of Personnel administers a merit system of employment for both the State Government and the local jurisdictions that have adopted Title 11A of the Revised Statutes by referendum. These jurisdictions comprise 20 of the State's 21 counties and more than 350 other jurisdictions, including both municipalities and special-purpose authorities and districts. Approximately a third of the State's 566 municipalities belong to the system, including most of the larger, older, and more urban ones. In addition, a small number of school districts have adopted the Merit System legislation.

The most recent New Jersey Department of Labor figures for local government employment in New Jersey (December 2001) indicate total employment of approximately 397,500, with about 240,500 of these employed in education. Thus, the employees in Merit System jurisdictions who do not work in school districts (the vast majority of the 108,505 identified in our records) represent about 69% of the local government employees in New Jersey who are employed outside the education sector.

You will note that the following tables and charts (with the exception of Page 51) summarize local government Merit System employment in terms of jobs rather than in terms of employees. This reflects the way in which we keep the employment records. While in State Government employees are not authorized to hold more than one job at a time, in local government it is not unusual for one employee to hold several part-time jobs concurrently. Further, it is not unusual for these jobs to be relatively unrelated to one another, and to vary widely in terms of title and even in terms of occupational group. As a result, we find that keeping records in terms of jobs is more meaningful in the local government arena. That is why most of the following tables and charts summarize 112,049 jobs rather than 108,505 employees. It is important to observe, however, that since the State Government counts reflect both employees and jobs, we can use the tables in the profile to draw comparisons between State Government jobs and local government merit system jobs, even if we cannot draw comparisons between the two workforces as such.

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INTRODUCTION (continued)

You will also note that the tables do not address a number of the issues that are covered in tables dealing with State Government employees, such as age, length of service, ethnic identity, gender, and salary. That is because the data files we use for local government are a consolidation of various local files, which differ from each other in the formats used for these types of data. Because the Department of Personnel's responsibilities with respect to local jurisdictions are largely confined to position classification and examinations, we have directed our most strenuous efforts in record maintenance to insuring the accuracy of data concerning class of service and title. We also offer local jurisdictions the opportunity to access our automated database, not only in order to provide a service but in hopes that this will motivate them to maintain more data fields on a current basis.

The following tables yield some broad outlines of the characteristics of local merit system jobs in New Jersey. Since 20 of our 21 counties have adopted Title 11A, it is not surprising that more than two of every five local jobs covered by the State Government merit system are county jobs. Almost ninety percent of these jobs are in the Career Service. The vast majority are full-time, although at the municipal level one job out of every six is part-time. Reflecting both population distribution and the geographic spread of the merit system, most of the local government jobs are in North Jersey; almost half of them are located in the five Northeast Jersey counties of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic, and Union. Over one third of the jobs are in the service occupations, while slightly more than a quarter of them are categorized as professional, technical or managerial.

The tables also reveal some interesting comparisons between State Government jobs and local government Merit System jobs. More than one out of seven local government Merit System jobs is part-time, compared with barely one out of fifty State Government jobs. More than one out of six State Government jobs is in the Unclassified Service, compared with about one out of ten local government merit system jobs. The concentration of State Government jobs in Mercer County contrasts significantly with the wider geographic distribution of local government merit system jobs. Finally, the occupational breakdown of local government merit system jobs is significantly different from that of State Government jobs. While the professional/technical/managerial group is by far the largest in the State Government, in the local jurisdictions the service occupations, which consist largely of protective services like police, fire fighting, and corrections, are most heavily represented. While clerical jobs are about one-fifth of the total at both the State and local levels, structural work is much more significant at the local level than at the State level.